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28 October 1965

OCI No. 2343/65

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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

PHILIPPINE ELECTIONS

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

Office of Current Intelligence

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OCI No. 2343/65

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
1 November 1965

MEMORANDUM

Intelligence Memorandum OCI No. 2343/65 of 28 October, entitled Philippine Elections, should be changed to read as follows:

(1) The third sentence of Para 2 in the summary should read, "The small Party for Philippine Progress under Raul Manglapus...."

(2) Para 12 on Page 3 should read, "Roxas will have some competition from Senator Manuel Manahan, the Philippine Progressive candidate. Manahan, a newspaperman...."

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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Philippine Elections

Summary

1. Philippine elections on 9 November will decide between the incumbent President Diosdado Macapagal of the Liberal Party and his Nacionalista Party opponent, Ferdinand Marcos. The race appears to be a close one, and the last weeks of the campaign are regarded as crucial. Also contesting the election will be candidates for eight seats in the Senate--one-third of that body--and all 104 seats of the House of Representatives.

2. Intensive campaigning has been underway for nearly a year. The issues have been almost entirely domestic, and have pointed up the lack of fundamental policy differences between the two major parties. The small People's Progressive Party under Raul Manglapus entered the picture in June, and its chief effect will be to draw votes from both major candidates.

3. All three of the presidential candidates are Western-oriented and pledged to continue close and equitable relations with the US and the West on matters of mutual interest. The significance of the election lies not so much in who wins but in whether the winner institutes and pursues a basic socioeconomic reform program. Without reforms, generalized public discontent is likely to increase and the small leftist element in the Philippines will probably grow.

The Candidates

4. Diosdado Macapagal, the Liberal Party candidate, is considered barely a middleweight in terms of political know-how, administrative ability, and intellectual capacity. He was elected to the presidency

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in 1961 on a reform program. Although he won by a comfortable margin, he did not control congress. His majority in the House of Representatives was not manageable and he had a minority in the Senate. As a result, most of the enabling legislation for his reform program was never passed. His one success was the passage of a land-reform law on which he has leaned heavily during his repeated campaign swings throughout the country.

5. Until the election campaign began to absorb almost all of his time last year, Macapagal had indicated a decided interest in asserting himself and the Philippines in Asian affairs. His principal vehicle was a Philippine claim to part of then British North Borneo, now Sabah, a member state of the Federation of Malaysia. This claim in turn led to a period of close relations with Indonesia and opposition to Malaysia. In 1964, however, Macapagal became alarmed by Indonesian militancy and at reports of Indonesian subversion within the Philippines itself and allowed relations with Djakarta to cool considerably. Despite some double-talk to the United States during his pro-Indonesia phase Macapagal has generally made an effort to be both reasonable and accommodating in his relations with Washington.

Ferdinand Marcos

6. Senator Ferdinand Marcos, the Nacionalista candidate, was a longtime member of the Liberal Party and president of that party from 1960 to 1964. In April 1964, he abruptly left the Liberals and joined the Nacionalistas. In November of that year he won the Nacionalista presidential candidacy over several other strong aspirants. For the past two years he has been president of the Senate.

7. Marcos has a record as a brilliant lawyer and a reputation as a skillful but ruthless politician. He has never lost an election. As president he would probably emerge as a stronger personality and a better administrator than Macapagal. He might take a more independent position vis-a-vis the US, but would continue friendly US-Philippine relations.

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Raul Manglapus

8. Senator Manglapus, the standard-bearer for the new People's Progressive Party, bolted the Liberals last year on the grounds that Macapagal had failed to carry out his promised program. Manglapus hopes to attract the 20-to-40-year age group, many members of which he believes are dissatisfied with both Liberals and Nacionalistas. Manglapus is attractive and well intentioned, but has no significant financial or political support. The effect of his candidacy on the other two parties remains unclear. There is no firm indication as to which major candidate he will hurt more.

Vice-Presidential Candidates

9. Philippine presidential and vice-presidential candidates do not run in tandem but are elected separately. Hence, one party may elect the president and the opposition the vice president. Macapagal, for example, was an "opposition vice president" from 1957 to 1961. Since the vice-presidency is one of the stepping stones to the presidency, there is generally almost as much interest in this race as in the one for the president.

10. Although the presidential election may be close, there seems to be little doubt about the outcome of the vice-presidential race. The Liberal candidate has been ticketed to win from the beginning of the contest. He is Senator Gerardo Roxas, son of the first post-war president.

11. Roxas has served in both the House of Representatives and the Senate, and he polled the highest number of votes in the 1963 senatorial elections. Although his father's name has certainly assisted him, he seems to have great appeal to an electorate that appears hungry for earnest and responsible officials. He has been no problem for the image builders. He looks, talks, and behaves like an intense young man with a high sense of responsibility.

12. Roxas will have some competition from Senator Emmanuel Maraban, the People's Progressive candidate. Maraban, a newspaperman turned reformist politician, seems likely to appeal to some of the same elements of the electorate who favor Roxas.

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13. The Nacionalista candidate is Senator Fernando Lopez, a long-time politician and leading businessman who served as Liberal Party vice president in 1949-53. Although he has a large following in his home area, the central Philippines, he seems unable to match the appeal of Roxas.

Senatorial and House Elections

14. Senators are elected at large in the Philippines. Eight of the 24-member body are elected every two years for a six-year term. Given the present line-up in the Senate, it seems unlikely that either the Liberals or the Nacionalistas will win enough of the eight contested seats to gain control of the upper house. The Liberals need to win six seats to gain a majority and the Nacionalistas seven. Accordingly, the two incumbent Progressive senators and one independent will probably hold the deciding votes in the Senate.

15. Control of the 104-member House of Representatives depends not only on lower-house elections but also on the outcome of the presidential race. Once the presidency is decided, a number of minority-party representatives usually defect to the majority. Depending on the ability of the new president to manipulate people and dispende patronage, his House majority will be more or less manageable and loyal.

Issues and Campaign

16. The campaign has focused principally on the record of the Macapagal administration on the one hand and the personal qualifications of Marcos on the other.

17. Marcos has charged the Macapagal administration with broken promises, high prices, graft and corruption, and a lack of attention to law and order which has permitted increased smuggling and a general increase in crime. Marcos presents himself as a steady, reliable leader who will keep his promises, and notes his wartime record as a guerrilla commander.

18. Macapagal retaliates by pointing to his land-reform law and the availability of low-priced rice as major accomplishments and as proof of his concern for

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the common man. He blames the Nacionalista-controlled Senate for obstructing his reform program and alleges that Marcos is unfit for the presidency. Liberals have charged Marcos with everything from corruption in office to murder.

19. Each party is claiming that the other will seek by fraud or violence to thwart the popular will before, during, and after the election. Every Philippine election campaign produces a certain amount of violence at lower levels, and this one is proving no exception. About 15 persons have already been killed.

20. It is an axiom of Philippine politics that a presidential ticket cannot win on an anti-American platform. At the same time, no Philippine president wants to be accused of not protecting the national interest, especially where the United States is concerned. Macapagal has been wary about any step that might reflect subservience to US influence, and Marcos has gone no further than to accuse Macapagal on occasion of subservience to "powerful foreign interests" or truckling to "alien business."

21. Foreign policy, however, including US-Philippine relations, has attracted little attention in the campaign. In a mid-October press interview, Marcos stated his position on foreign policy. In Vietnam he is willing to continue nonmilitary Philippine assistance, but would extend military aid only if it should become clear that a military solution is possible there. Should he become president, he would "normalize" relations with Indonesia, settle the Sabah claim, and try to organize a Southeast Asian common market. He foresees no "substantial changes" in policy toward Communist China. He stated that there is a deep and extensive friendship among Filipinos toward Americans. He added, however, that ultimately this friendship can survive only if US-Philippine relations are modified toward greater reciprocity and equality.

The Electorate

22. The Philippine electorate of some nine million voters is literate and fairly well informed.

23. The Philippines Free Press, a crusading weekly news magazine, is tremendously popular throughout the islands and is published in both English and Tagalog. The last four years have seen a doubling and perhaps a

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tripling of transistor radios in the country. This proliferation has not only brought individual candidates closer to a greater number of people, but has also broadened village awareness of domestic and foreign issues.

24. Despite the efforts of both major presidential candidates to arouse grass-roots support by extended tours of the countryside, neither has stirred any great popular enthusiasm. A veteran Filipino columnist probably reflected the sentiments of many observers when he commented a month before the election that he had no "feeling in his bones" as to who the winner would be.

25. The Philippine electorate craves efficient and honest government and increasingly feels it does not get it. There is a generalized condition of discontent and lawlessness in the Philippines that is fed by several basic and interrelated factors: widespread rural poverty; deep social and economic cleavage between upper and lower classes; extensive unemployment and underemployment; widespread graft, corruption, and favoritism in government and in business. In the cities, especially among the youth, there is frustration over the lack of political and economic opportunity.

Remnants of a Communist insurgent organization--People's Liberation Army, or "Huks"--are still at large in densely populated Central Luzon. Although currently concerned chiefly with self-preservation, the Huks represent a nucleus for a revived Communist movement.

26. A renascent nationalism is growing rapidly in the Philippines. To some extent it feeds and is fed by these frustrations. Further, elements among the intellectuals and the press--perhaps up to 10 percent--are attracted to an anti-Western posture.

The Outlook

27. Whatever the outcome of the presidential race, the preservation of a friendly US-Philippine relationship will remain one of the bases of Philippine policy. At the same time, however, since growing nationalism is now an established trend, the new administration will be highly sensitive to any indications that Filipino interests are being subordinated to those of the United States.

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28. Both major candidates have promised to attack basic domestic socioeconomic problems. The prospect that such a program--long delayed and greatly needed--will be instituted and pursued by either candidate is uncertain. The chief obstacle will be continued official preoccupation with politics. Without such a program, nationalism and discontent are likely to lend themselves to leftist exploitation. This would present increasing problems to the Philippine Government in domestic administration and in the maintenance of a strong pro-US and pro-West position.

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